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not eat so much as other people. He must leave enough for others or he would be ashamed. He would take a few lumps of porridge from one wooden dish (*ingcwembe*) and then hand the other dishes to those around him. Each day one beast had to be killed from the house of each wife of the *inkosi* in turn. It was their food and they could not cease killing. The *inkosi* had his own great garden. After hoeing the *induna* of the *indlunkulu* called all the village people to come and plant these gardens first before their own. They did this because if a man was hungry, he went to the *inkosi* and said 'I am hungry' and he was given food to eat.

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In this account it is clear that the daily life of the Paramount had both private and public aspects. In private he was vulnerable to attacks from enemies. Hence he depended on the services of a trusted attendant to see that no sorcerers could make bad magic from his excreta; and he ate no food except that prepared by his own wives and mothers. On the other hand, in public he appeared as the generous and ceremonious ruler, providing food, beer and snuff for his visitors, and himself practising that restraint in eating which was characteristic of Ngoni good manners both from host and guest.

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In addition to the daily routine of sharing food with his immediate entourage and chance visitors, the Paramount had special feasts known as *izipheko*. These feasts, as described by Cibambo, were related to the bringing of tribute, thus emphasizing the reciprocal nature of the gifts passing between the people and the Paramount.

¶ Along with the tribute the *inkosi* had his feasts with which he wanted to feed his people. At an appointed time the *inkosi* and his wives and mothers prepared beer and three or four beasts for his men and women. Men ate their meat in the kraal but the women at the *indlunkulu*. All the people thanked him everywhere, including the women, and the men were thanking with dancing. Even although people were not called by the *inkosi*, yet many people came to his village to beg food from the *inkosi*. Also by telling the *izinduna* the *inkosi* would invite people to eat with him, and many would come from far away. The wives of the *inkosi* and his mothers were cooking soft or hard porridge, with different *imbido* (relishes) so that the *inkosi* could give them to his people. They would all be waiting in the kraal. A generous *inkosi* liked to stay in the kraal so that his food should be sent there in order to feed both notable people and poor people. He would be watching whom to give food to.

In this way although there was tribute (*imitulo*), it was not very burdensome. People did not complain to the *inkosi* about it. It was as if they were playing, because of the dancing. Those who had no wealth came to the *inkosi* and begged him to help them. The *inkosi* gave cattle to these people without asking them to pay again, because he said 'The people and the cattle, they are all mine. They are eating each other.'

There was an apparent contradiction here. On the one hand there was true reciprocity, that of the people who brought tribute or gifts and in

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never use any word in which *indaba* (meeting or affair) occurred. They substituted *incayo* for *indaba* and spoke of him as Zwangencayo. The women of the Ngomezulu clan could never use the word *ilanga* (sun) for which they substituted *ijiko*, since Langa was the name of the father of Zwide who had married into the Ngomezulu clan.

Though the particular verbal form of *hlonipa* which the Ngoni royal women brought from the south survived only in one area of northern Ngoniland, the concept inherent in it and the attitudes of honour and respect which it implied were expressed in the use of *Nkomo* in thanking and in the other non-verbal forms already mentioned. Manga, the Royal Sister of Cikusi, was as we have seen, thanked '*Nkomo Bambo*' but also with the formula '*Zikomo mntwana wenkosi*' (thanks, child of the Paramount). Among the central Ngoni there were two expressions of thanks which were probably a relic of *hlonipa* vocabulary since they were used only by the leading women. The customary form of thanking, and of taking leave after a conversation or after getting a reply to a question, was '*Zikomo*' with the clan name and honorific prefix added. The royal women in this area, when making the response to this form of thanking, always replied '*Zaithwa*' with the clan name, and they thanked each other by '*Zimata*' with the clan name instead of '*Zikomo*'. When I observed this and used it myself, they nudged each other and said 'She also is one of us.'

644 We have discussed so far the outward signs of respect shown to the royal women, and the visible marks of distinction in their clothes and the number of their attendants. We shall now examine the way in which the authority of the royal women was exercised. This will give some indication of their relationship to the political organization of the kingdoms, in so far as they had certain responsibilities to the people as a whole, and to their husbands and sons within the royal village where they lived. At the royal village the Queen Mother and her co-widows shared with the wives of the two leading houses to the right and left of the *indlunkulu*, the responsibility for preparing and serving food and beer for the Paramount and those whom he called to eat with him. The text by NyaNsangu[1] describes the etiquette of beer drinking in one of the chiefdoms in the northern kingdom, of sending food to the chief when he ate in the cattle kraal, and of assembling the wives in order of
● [264] precedence according to their houses to take their food. The formality of this etiquette was characteristic of Ngoni eating and drinking, and it was maintained by the organization and forethought of the royal women, the big wives and mothers of the Paramount, who planned the work of their own households and supervised that of the lesser wives who were attached to the two main houses.

[1] The procedure described in the text applied equally to the Paramount's village and to the villages of ruling chiefs. The Ngoni in that area used the term '*inkosi*' for chief as well as for Paramount.

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
FR5 Ngoni FR5

the Paramount's interest in modern aspects of administration, especially after his visit to the course for chiefs held at the Jeanes School in Zomba in 1934. The old councillors, sceptical though they were of many modern innovations, recognized that they were in line with European ideas of administration, and also that they appealed to the younger educated men in the kingdom who had travelled and seen other countries and ways of living.

The Paramount married NaNdau as his big wife, and though, as the text mentions, he married two other wives when urged by the senior men, he sent them away after a year or two and NaNdau remained his only wife. She had an assured position since she bore him five sons and two daughters, the first-born being a daughter and receiving all the respect due to a Royal Sister. One of the brothers of NaNdau was chief of a division, and another was *mlomo wenkosi* to the Paramount. She succeeded in maintaining much of the traditional pattern in the royal village and the big house. Her personal supervision of the household was thorough and competent. She exercised complete authority over the girls and women belonging to the household and arranged that the Ngoni custom of examining the young girls, including her own daughter, at regular intervals should be maintained. Her knowledge of Ngoni songs and dances, and her own skilled and graceful participation in the dances on state occasions, brought her before the people in her role as the big wife. At the feasts given by the Paramount she moved about among the people to serve them, and listened to complaints from the women about affairs in their villages which she then handed on to her husband.

The back verandah and all the outbuildings were the domain of the Paramount's wife. When I was there, she had some ten or twelve girls and women as well as several men working for her. They came and went if they had homes elsewhere, and the personnel changed often. All the household work was done by them: bringing water and fuel, pounding maize, and a good deal of the cooking, though this was closely supervised by the Paramount's wife. No beer was made in the household as it was against the rules of the church to which they belonged. In other Ngoni households of subordinate chiefs and *alumuzana* who were not Christian, the brewing of beer was a time-absorbing part of the household tasks and was shared by the different wives under the supervision of the big house. In Maganga, when the Paramount was entertaining unexpected guests and wanted to offer them beer, he inquired from his *induna* if anyone was brewing beer in the village, and sent for some for which he paid. When he knew beforehand that guests were coming who would expect beer to be offered to them as part of the Paramount's hospitality, he told his *induna* to see that beer was made in one of the village households, and he paid for it.

The cooking which went on in the big house kitchens was always extensive. The Paramount, his wife and six children had two meals a

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
FR5 Ngoni FR5

643 574 264 day, and so did all the regular helpers in the household. The stream of visitors was incessant, especially on Saturdays when the market was held, and on the days when the Appeal Court was in session at the court-house adjoining the village. Not every caller was given food, but if they came from a distance it was always offered. In the setting of a modern brick house and a Christian household with only one wife, the Paramount had to provide a great deal of hospitality. The old tradition that *alumuzana* and other important men visited the Paramount daily no longer held. But the weekly market and the court meetings, and the lorry service on the main road bringing callers from north and south, as well as administrative affairs which had constantly to be discussed and settled, made the Paramount's house and *bwalo* a very busy place.

Officials of the royal village and state officials

574 643 645 When I lived in the royal village for several weeks I was aware of a never-ending stream of persons coming to consult or to work with the Paramount. Well protected as he was by the Ngoni method of indirect approach and the surveillance of the village and *bwalo* by the *induna* of the big house and the *mlomo wenkosi*, the Paramount was still subject to constant inquiries from his office-bearers who needed his counsel, and from persons great and small from all over his kingdom who believed that he could help them. Among the village officials the *induna* of the big house worked closely with the headman of the village, and displayed unremitting efforts to see that all affairs in the immediate neighbourhood of the Paramount should go smoothly. They were constantly on the *bwalo* of the big house, or near the gate of the fence surrounding it. These two always turned up when visitors came, and sat on the verandah or in the *bwalo* with the other senior men, and kept an eye on all that happened. If anything went wrong in the village or the compound when the Paramount was away they were in great distress, as on one occasion when a man ran amok and threatened people with a knife. There was a strong tradition that around the Paramount and his living quarters everything and everyone had to be orderly and peaceable.

645 574 The *umbongi*, or praiser of the Paramount, was among the royal village officials, though he only appeared on the *bwalo* when ceremonies took place there. He sometimes came when important visitors arrived if their visit was known in advance. He always came to the big dances and feasts held at the royal village. He was an old man, tall and spare, leaning heavily on a long staff, and many of the onlookers who listened attentively to his praise-songs showed nervousness when he began making personal remarks, for he had a sharp tongue and a flow of language.

Of the state officials the *mlomo wenkosi* was seldom away from the big house or far from the person of the Paramount. He had married the Paramount's sister, and was own brother to the *inkosikasi*, and his

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
FR5 Ngoni FR5

what took place, informants were anxious to point this out. They also admitted that its successful carrying out depended on several factors which no longer operated. The former Ngoni households with a number of servants and nursemaids were only to be found in the families of the Paramount and subordinate chiefs. The rigid separation of the girl from her own family at marriage was no longer usual in the central kingdom where Ngoni marriages often took place in the same village, and where daughters of important men stayed in their fathers' villages at marriage instead of leaving.

In Ngoni households family sleeping and eating arrangements depended not upon the small individual family but on the extended family group and on the boys' dormitory (*laweni*). As a general rule small children slept with their mother in her hut, but when her husband was sleeping with her it was considered wrong to have any but very young children in the hut. Boys up to the age of seven, when they went to the *laweni*, and girls up to their marriage, usually slept in the hut of a mother or a widowed sister of their father.

Each wife, after she had been 'shown the hearth-stones', had a granary built for her by her husband or her husband's brothers where she stored grain. On the rafters in her hut, and in pots and jars on the enclosed verandah, and in pits dug under the eaves, she stored other foodstuffs, such as chillies, beans and sweet potatoes. From these supplies, supplemented by fresh 'relish' from the gardens or bush, she cooked daily meals which she served to her husband, and which her younger sons in the *laweni* fetched to eat there, while she ate with her young children. Her husband's meals and the older boys' meals were taken in company with the male members of his kinship group and other villagers at the men's meeting-place by the gate of the kraal. His wife sent his food by a child in a covered basket with the small pot of relish on top. The publicity of the men's eating habits made them critical among their fellows of their wives' cooking, and this was a strong incentive among Ngoni wives to maintain a high standard of cooking. In addition to sending food to her husband, an Ngoni wife was expected to send a basket of food now and then to her father-in-law, or to any of her brothers-in-law who had assisted her to mend a roof or build a granary.

Within a wife's hut, not only food but other possessions, both personal and household, were stored. Clothes for daily and ceremonial use; mats for sleeping on and for drying grain; pots for water, cooking, and beer-brewing; ornamental jars for storing beans; baskets for carrying grain; food baskets embroidered with beads—the Ngoni wife of good family expected to possess all these and to keep them carefully. Many of them she brought with her on her marriage or had given her later as presents by her own parents and family, in order that she might not appear poor or of low rank among her husband's people. For the same reason, she

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
FR5 Ngoni FR5

on was placed on it. The meat in the basket and on the gate stayed there all night.

Following the ritual of offering meat to the spirits came the ritual of cooking and eating the meat, both that offered to the spirits and the rest. After the basket of meat had been left all night in the place of the spirits, the large quantity on the gate was carried away and cooked by an old woman outside the hut of Bambo Manga's granddaughter. The meat in the basket which had been offered to the spirits was put in a pot and cooked on the fire in Bambo Manga's hut. It stayed cooking all day and all night till the following morning. Dzinthenga Phungwako, an old and highly respected *lidoda*, came to the hut and divided the sacrificial meat among all who were in the house, that is Bambo Manga, her daughter and granddaughter and several senior women. When they had finished the leading women stood up and thanked '*Zikhomo Maseko*', '*Zikhomo Magwagwa*'. Then they washed their hands and went to their own houses.

The large quantity of meat which had been laid on the gate and cooked on another fire in another *bwalo* was carried in a big pot and put down outside Bambo Manga's hut in the late afternoon. Her daughter came outside and divided the meat into three piles: a small one from the breast-bones for the women, a leg for the chief, the head for Kabwazi the headman of a neighbouring village, and the rest in a big pot for the men. A boy came to tell Lopati that all was ready and he and the chief went out to the place where the beast was killed, near the gate of the kraal. There were four groups already sitting there and the chief and Lopati made a fifth: the *madoda*, the senior men; the *majaha*, the young men; the *mabusa*, the herd-boys; and the little boys. Before Lopati divided the meat he and the chief washed elaborately with water brought in a gourd, and then he washed the knife before cutting the meat. He called the *madoda* to send someone for their portion in a basket, then the young men and the herd-boys were given their portions—a basket for each group, and the small boys had bits put in their hands. The eating was very sedate, there was no snatching of choice bits, and in each group the one who fetched the meat distributed it. There was the general atmosphere of a ritual meal rather than a feast, though the small boys smacked their lips appreciatively. From time to time Lopati called up someone from a group and gave him a bit more to divide up. When it was all eaten, a boy was sent to fetch water and the soapy leaves which the Ngoni used for washing, and the chief and Lopati and the *madoda* all washed the grease off their fingers. Then Lopati stood up and called out '*Siyadumisa baba, zikhomo mntwana wenkosi*', 'We are praising you, father, thank you child of the Paramount', and the others all agreed and said '*Zikhomo baba.*' Then they all went together to Bambo Manga's hut and stood opposite her door and called out the same thanks. The women who had eaten their meat

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

562 These skills of management, and of order and dignity in
461 serving, were not however only seen in large-scale operations.
592 The modern young Ngoni wife serving tea and 'scones' to her husband's guests sitting on his veranda showed the same qualities of careful preparation and considerate service as her grandmother had shown presiding over 500 guests at a wedding feast.

562 Household management in Ngoni homes included primarily managing the household staff, allotting their tasks to them, settling their quarrels, looking after them when sick, marrying off the young ones when the time came. In the all-important aspect of feeding a large household and its dependents, Ngoni women assumed responsibility for seeing that there were enough supplies of different kinds of food at hand, for regular consumption and for emergencies. They consulted at times with the 'official' who was in charge of their 'house' about mobilizing supplies or organizing women helpers to cultivate in the gardens. Most significant in the eyes of Ngoni and non-Ngoni alike was the task of Ngoni
[264] women of 'dividing the food' at every meal-time. It was a key concept in Ngoni culture that at all times when food, beer, or other kinds of goods were to be divided out, and enjoyed or used by a large number of people, the 'one who divided' was an important individual. He, or more often she, must be of 'good character', who assumed, or was given, the task because he or she knew how to do it, and no one questioned the justice or the competence with which the dividing was done. Again I was impressed by the almost nonchalant air with which Ngoni women ladled out food for a large number of individuals and groups. It looked
[461] so easy. It was obviously not a simple matter. The results were always accepted and welcomed, and I never heard any grumbles.

593 Central to the organization of the household, and in one
592 sense the axis on which it revolved, was the care and attention the wife gave to her husband. Cooking, including the

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

855 primarily within his mother's household, but also, and especially immediately after weaning, in his grandmother's household. His needs for food and warmth could in fact be met in any of the households which formed part of his father's house and family group. There was no greater contrast for the small boy about the age of seven between this kind of life in the women's compound and his plunge into the life of the boys' dormitory.

The father's role with young children

562 During day-time in Ngoni villages Ngoni men and women lived almost in two separate worlds, the women in their compounds, the men by the kraal gate or about the village. When important visitors arrived the veranda of the 'big house' be-
574 came a general meeting-place. Chiefs and leading men who
[342] had acquired chairs, among other modern household furni-
[177] ture, preferred to entertain their guests on their own veranda
[352] where they had some degree of privacy, and to offer them chairs to sit on instead of the kraal fence to lean against. This
512 use of chairs which they found more comfortable to sit on brought many of the fathers of families back to their own
[264] verandas now and then during the day, though they con-
[521] tinued to eat their meals with the other men at the kraal gate, and to go there to discuss village affairs and watch over the coming and going of the cattle.

593 This change of habit brought the fathers of families into closer touch with their young children, and it was accele-
[177] rated by the growing Christian tradition in which fathers were more closely associated with certain aspects of their children's upbringing. It was the father who arranged for the baptism
[851] of the children which took place in the local church and was a ceremony attended by most of the village, whether Christians or not. When an evangelist or a school-teacher con-
[782] ducted evening prayers, as they often did near the kraal where anyone could come after the evening meal, Christian fathers sometimes carried a child in their arms to the prayers.

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

858 867 signs of irritation at female control, especially with this prohibition on going to the kraal gate. They escaped surveillance and ran off there now and then, only to be caught by one of the men, beaten and brought back to the compound with the remark: 'This child is not yet a herd boy. Keep him with you.'

If the village was near a roadway with traffic on it, or near a river, children were forbidden to go there without some older person with them. They were also warned not to go near fireplaces in case a burning log fell out, and to keep away from the woodpile where there might be snakes.

Training in habits

855 In these surroundings, diversified, orderly, and on the whole safe if forbidden places were avoided, young children's needs were attended to and they were gradually trained to look after themselves. For food, health and sleep, their primary physical needs, they had their older sisters, nurse girls, mothers, grandmothers and helpers all at hand to ensure that these needs were satisfied.

264 862 After the post-weaning months were over, and generally though not always after the next baby was born, a young child went back to eat with his mother in her compound and sleep in her hut, though a grandmother, if she had taken a special fancy to a child, might say she was going to keep him to eat and sleep with her. In his mother's compound twice a day the child watched her and her helpers preparing and cooking a meal. In due time he was called to the veranda where the food lay smoking, his hands were wiped, he was made to rinse out his mouth, and he sat down beside his mother or his nurse in a circle round the food basket. This contained the mash of cooked grain, usually maize, and beside it were the little pots of cooked 'relish', beans, peas, [262] green vegetables, tomatoes, ground-nuts. At first someone pinched up a little lump of the mash, dipped it in a relish, and popped it into his mouth, telling him to shut his mouth and chew before he swallowed. Later he learned to do this

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

himself, with his eyes rather anxiously on the elders, lest he should take too large a lump, or get the relish all over his hand and wrist instead of only on his finger-tips. He learned, however hungry he was, not to stuff himself, and not to eat noisily. If he smacked his lips and gulped audibly, someone in the circle might say: 'I hear the guns of the Tyandla people booming.' They all stopped eating and looked at him, and he learned that a proverb could be a veiled rebuke, and he hung his head, ashamed.

Sometimes the smaller children had cow's milk or curds and whey or thin gruel given to them in a tiny gourd between the main meal-times, and through the day nurse girls and older sisters gave them little snacks if they thought of it or if the child whimpered because it was hungry. A favourite snack was ground bulrush millet, creamy and nutty to taste. Throughout this period spent in the women's world the child did not lack food either at or between meals. As he grew more mobile and independent, he went foraging in the compounds of his other mothers and his grandmothers, especially if his own mother had gone to her garden. They always welcomed him and gave him something to go on with.

After set meals the child was made to rinse his mouth, and his hands were cleaned by his nurse girl and his face and chest washed if he had covered himself with food fragments. His nurse girl found him a 'tooth-brush twig' and frayed it for him, and taught him to use it after meals as well as in the early morning.

Washing of small children was always done in the compound. While some children squirmed and yelled when washed, others liked it. They sat grinning on the veranda while their mother or nurse splashed water over them, rubbed soapy leaves on their hair, dried them with a cloth, and rubbed cow's fat on their skin. The Ngoni children in well-ordered households shone with cleanliness till they were about six years old. Then the boys dodged these female attentions, their skin became dry and scruffy, and their hair full

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

575 there. It was a rough Spartan existence, where individual feelings and preferences had little scope, and where the younger ones were kept busy from dawn to dusk. Ngoni elders believed and indeed it was a key concept in their [858] culture, that boys should be kept busy all the time and made [515] to wash in cold water. Bathing in the cold streams of the Ngoni highlands was part of dormitory life. No Edwardian father talked more piously and convincingly about the merits of cold baths than Ngoni parents did.

575 The boys living in the dormitory continued to be fed from 264 their mother's household. The older boys had their food brought by a child to the kraal gate as was done for their fathers. The younger ones sometimes fetched their own and took it to the kraal gate where they sat on the extreme edge of the men's group. More often they were given what was left over from their fathers' and older brothers' servings. [146] This procedure accounted for the inadequate amounts eaten [272] by the younger boys, though they drank some milk when [262] milking the herds and out at the grazing grounds they made curds and caught birds and baked them in clay. Sometimes the desperation of hunger drove them to steal maize cobs or ground nuts from their mother's granary to roast in the [685] ashes of their fire. This kind of stealing was condemned as very wrong by Ngoni standards, and sometimes older boys, in order to show their authority, forced the young ones to steal in this way on their behalf.

575 What effect did dormitory life produce on the boys? The [867] Ngoni parents, the fathers that is, expected it to produce [155] toughness, leadership, responsibility and respect for authority. On the whole it was successful. The Spartan life ensured toughness, the herding of cattle demanded responsibility and leadership, and the smooth running of dormitory society was based on respect for authority and obedience to it. From time to time the younger boys ganged up together to protect themselves from over-exploitation, and learned in these efforts at resistance the value of joint action. There was con-

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

round covered food basket, the side dishes in small covered earthenware bowls. Among the traditional Ngoni dishes learned by girls were the following:

Gruel made of cow's milk and maize flour (for young children).
Whole maize boiled with beans and round peas.
Sweet potatoes boiled, peeled and mashed with tomatoes.
Beans and finger millet flour cooked separately and then stirred together.
Pumpkins cooked with ground-nut paste.
Ground-nut flour cooked with scraps of meat.
Whole tall millet pounded with ground-nuts.
Pot-roast chicken with tomatoes, onions and ground-nuts.

In Ngoni households meat when cooked in large quantities, not just as broth made from bones and titbits, was served on a special wooden meat-dish, round or oblong with rounded ends, and supported on three sturdy legs. This meat-dish was an integral part of the equipment of every 'true Ngoni' household, and, like the French housewife's omelet pan, was after use wiped clean and polished with clarified fat. The outside of these meat-dishes was often decorated with 'poker work' designs by the maker, and such decorated and shining meat-dishes were treasured as heirlooms. Other, but rare, heirlooms were hammered brass pots with a flat bottom and turned over edge, of the pattern known in India as *dekchies*. The Ngoni women who owned them declared they had been brought by their ancestors from the south.

All the extra fat when a beast was killed was sent to the women of the 'house' in whose herd it was, and this fat was cooked until it was clarified, and then stored. Butter was made by shaking milk in a gourd, and it was also clarified for keeping. Formerly milk curds were made daily by the senior women and kept to mature in a jar before being eaten. Only in a few Ngoni households was this still done.

Beer was made on special occasions when the women had

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

generally assumed that everything was 'dirty' which was not hygienically clean. The Ngoni resented this, all the more because of their cultural insistence on decency and order, and on certain forms of external cleanliness. 181 356 515 182

Their huts, furniture and mats were often infested with ticks and bugs—neither of which the Ngoni liked, regarding them as rather disgusting. The old remedy was to leave the tick-infested site and burn the objects full of bugs. As villages became more stationary and property accumulated in the huts, and became more valuable and expensive, they built strangers' huts for visitors who might otherwise infect their own. Bugs were dealt with by bringing all bedding, mats and bedsteads out into the sun and pouring boiling water on them again and again. 825 356 [485]

Similarly it was an aesthetic disgust rather than hygiene which made them insist that there should be no spitting or nose-blowing on the floors of huts or verandas. Such actions had to take place outside, and vehement comments were made when a visitor forgot his manners in this way. An ingenious tiny iron spoon with a long handle was used by the older Ngoni for cleaning the ears and nose. 515 356 [413]

Perhaps nothing showed the Ngoni pleasure in and desire for cleanliness so clearly as the quick and apt excuses made when standards were obviously in temporary abeyance. There was no doubt that young men and girls liked looking clean and well-groomed. The daily wash in the river with soapy leaves, followed by rubbing on fat or oil made the skin glisten. We have talked already about the use of twigs as tooth-brushes, the rinsing of the mouth before and after meals, and the use of astringent fruit to make the mouth feel clean. 515 [576]

The same scrupulous attitude about cleanliness was seen in the washing of dishes, spoons and cooking-pots after each meal. It was almost as if the standard of housewifery was proclaimed by the sight of food baskets, gourds, spoons, etc., spread on the platform outside the hut to dry. Washing up 264

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

264 might be a chore but when it was done in the open it was also an advertisement of high standards.

The art of speech

191 The Ngoni believed that as boys and girls neared adult life they should be well drilled in the art of speaking, because it
195 was regarded as a basic Ngoni characteristic. We have seen how adults watched children tossing riddles at each other to test, among other things, their quickness of speech. Girls had been watched telling stories to see how they held their audience and showed a sense of dramatic values in recitation.

In all the standardized forms of speech such as greetings, messages, announcements, responses, young adults were expected to speak clearly and correctly, without mumbling but not too loudly. When relating an event, such as a visit, a bull-fight, or when giving evidence in the courts, they had to give an orderly account without repetition. Otherwise they were told: 'You are speaking badly. Tell it again, in order, from the beginning.' An ordered sequence of the narrative was always demanded, and, as we shall see in the next chapter, they used proverbs frequently to impress on people speaking the need to get to the point, while leaving out nothing of importance.

The art of words used with music in songs was regarded as
533 a special gift and those who possessed it were encouraged to develop it. Inspiration for words and music was as we have seen something which came 'from the chest' and was regarded almost as if it was a special kind of breathing. Some used this gift to sing with a solo instrument such as a stringed lyre. Others used it to compose new songs for *ngoma* dances.
[177] Others again wrote Christian hymns and composed music for them, or set them to traditional Ngoni tunes.

The art of dancing

535 'Ngoni people think that their dances show their personality,
[828] their manhood, that which was born in them.' Phrases like

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

wife. We have talked in Chapters IV and VII of her duties in organizing food supplies, supervising cooking, and that supreme test of competence: dividing out the food so that all had a fair share. The same high standard of skill was expected in the general care and supervision of the compound, the children and the household staff. Ngoni women, like their menfolk, were proud of being able to supervise other people and organize life around them, to control others satisfactorily, to hear complaints and to pacify quarrels. The proverb 'The tooth laughs to no purpose', meaning that angry people show their teeth but with no merriment, was often heard when Ngoni women intervened to stop two quarrelling girls or to prevent an irate helper getting angry with the nurse girls.

The traits of justice and wisdom were important elements in the foundation of a Ngoni married woman's reputation. These were judged by her ability to allocate fair shares of food to servants and helpers, and to adjudicate wisely in women's disputes. Two proverbs referred particularly to dividing out food and were said about women who were either careless or stingy, and did not give their helpers a fair share. 'The finger-nails are surfeited' meant that the important people had eaten heartily without thought for others; and 'She has sliced one side only' had the same connotation, that those who had the supplies were keeping too much for themselves. Two other proverbs drove home this principle of *noblesse oblige* when emphasizing the responsibilities of married women: 'The elephant is not made heavy by its trunk,' and 'If the cows do not produce milk the herdsman is responsible.'

The ideal personality of Ngoni men

As we have just said, there was a definite personality pattern for young men whether married or not, which emphasized special qualities looked for in them, since on the whole they had relatively little authority or responsibility in village

/12 cont'd/

252 The maize is shelled as required, the grains are pounded in a mortar, and then soaked in water for three or four days, if there is time. They are then pounded again, and the flour winnowed out. [831] The residue is ground between two stones. The husks obtained after [213] the first pounding are used as animal fodder, and in beer making. The diligent housewife pounds twice a week, each pounding lasting for about three hours. It is usual for a group of women living as [461] neighbours to pound at the same time, singing together.

[251] The maize flour is dried in the sun, and then put into a pot or basket until required for porridge or beer. Porridge forms the basis 262 of most meals, although in February and March there may not be enough maize left in the storehouses to make this possible. Adults [264] eat porridge in solid form, kneading handfuls of it between their fingers before eating, but infants are fed on fluid porridge made from [853] the ground flour. The herdboys in charge of the cattle may use the milk to make their porridge with. Cooking is women's work, but [462] men by themselves on a journey or working on the tobacco farms will cook porridge for themselves. Green mealies, usually fried, are eaten when available.

263 Relish is required to go with the porridge, the commonest relishes being pumpkin leaves and hibiscus leaves. There are in addition 222 many wild fruits and leaves searched for in the bush at their appro- 241 priate seasons, while the gardens provide pumpkins, cucumbers, 262 various kinds of beans and peas, and edible gourds. The most sought-after relish, and one of the most infrequently found, is meat. Chick- 262 ens are given to honoured visitors, while beef, mutton, pork, and goat meat are eaten when they can be found. Livestock other than chickens are killed for eating only on ceremonial occasions, such as [231] funerals or marriages, but owners not infrequently kill animals and sell the meat to raise money to pay damages, to finance a journey, or to obtain labour in the garden. Animals that die are usually eaten. Some people keep ducks, pigeons and tame guinea fowl, while such 235 game as is killed on the /13/ hunt is divided among the hunters and 224 taken home to be eaten. Owners of guns sometimes hunt by themselves and sell the meat.

13:Fraser M-5 (ca. 1890) 1901
FR5 Ngoni FR5

The art of cultivating the ground is only now being learned by the Ngoni. Formerly this was the work of the slaves. The masters know how to kill not to till. The soil is fairly rich though not nearly so fertile as what is found at the lake shore and in the deep valleys between. Maize is the great crop. But owing to the devastation of locusts for several years in succession, the Ngoni have learned to plant also reserve gardens of kaffava, for the locusts and drought can scarcely affect this crop. A great variety of vegetables is cultivated, peas, beans, tomatoes, pumpkins, and so on. I have counted a variety of twenty-two different vegetables in the gardens beside one village.

These vegetables are used as relish, but the staple food is always maize porridge, and a tasty dish it is. The maize is well cleaned, ground into a fine flour, and when cooked by a clever woman makes a most tempting dish of white porridge. The relish may consist of a piece of stewed fowl or goat, or well boiled vegetable. The greatest dainty that was ever offered to me was a dish of lovely maize porridge with relish of stewed caterpillars. I did without the relish on that occasion. An interesting thing about these caterpillars is that they live on the top of trees, and the natives, to get at them, will hew down the tree. You can see how delicate a dish it makes if every caterpillar in the dish has been got at the cost of a tree. They take the place of the old European dish of peacocks cooked in their feathers.

No native thinks he has eaten until he has had his porridge. A missionary whom I know once unwisely gave a feast to his elders, feeding them on European food. They ate till they could eat no more, then stretching themselves, and after politely expressing their satisfaction by audible sounds of satiety, they rose and and said, "We must now go home to our porridge."

The maize and vegetables are grown with very little trouble, but there is also a species of millet which is largely cultivated, and at great cost to the country. The ground has to be carefully prepared, trees are hewn down in the hot season, and left to dry up in the blazing sun. The whole patch of garden is covered over with these trees and the branches, then when the first clouds appear, the wood is fired. For a day it blazes, and then during the gathering of the clouds the atmosphere is thick with the smoke of burning trees. The rains come and wash the carbon into the soil, and it makes an excellent fertiliser. But the crop exhausts the ground in two or three years, so another patch of